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THE BOY  
*AND HIS CLUBS*

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McCORMICK

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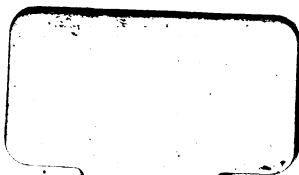
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## **THE BOY AND HIS CLUBS**



# The Boy and His Clubs

By  
**WILLIAM McCORMICK**  
*Olivet Boys' Club, Reading, Pa.*

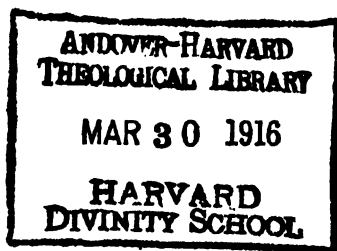
With a Foreword by  
**THOMAS CHEW**



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## FOREWORD

**I** AM very glad Mr. McCormick has written this little book. It is what our churches need for a suggestive and helpful guide. Most boys' club workers feel that what their clubs need to make them ideal is a dash of real, old-fashioned religion in them. What the church's organizations of boys need, to make them ideal and real, is a touch of the spirit found in every live boys' club. In the Olivet Boys' Club there is a religious spirit that is good for the boys and the club. The religion is woven into the life of the boys, and in such a natural way that I cannot tell whether the club is the warp and religion the woof, or religion the warp and the club the woof. Whichever it is the figure of Christ is woven into the characters of the boys in a sane and happy manner.

The new interest in boys which the Men and Religion Movement is developing, ought to make this book helpful to ministers and laymen. The weakness of nearly all our church work for boys is that we have no places to put them to work nor to put them to play.

THOMAS CHEW.

*Fall River Boys' Club.*



## Contents

I.	THE PLAN . . . . .	9
II.	WORK THAT'S BEING DONE . . .	13
III.	THE Y. M. C. A. IDEA . . . .	24
IV.	THE MASS CLUB . . . . .	31
V.	THE BOY WHO WORKS . . . .	38
VI.	THE QUEST OF FUN . . . . .	52
VII.	THE CLUB AND THE CHURCH . . .	58
VIII.	THE MAKING OF A CLUB . . . .	62
IX.	IN UNION IS STRENGTH . . . .	72
X.	A WORK THAT LASTS : . . . .	87



# I

## THE PLAN

**T**HIS is a day of Men and Religion. Never before so strenuously and systematically as during the last few months has an effort been made to get religion into men and to get men into religious activity. There has been an arousing and an awakening. All the nation has felt the thrill of it. In some places the zeal has struck deep. In some others it is but a scratch. But everywhere has the phrase at least grown familiar. And here and there and everywhere, even among the scoffers and the sitters in the scorners' seats, people are looking for results ; hopefully here ; dubiously there ; derisively elsewhere.

The results have not been spectacular. They cannot be tabulated in statistics. They are real and genuine some of us believe. They are cumulative and crescent we honestly hope. The end is not yet nor nearly yet. There is a spirit of inquiry and unrest abroad. "And what shall we do?" people

are asking as specifically as they asked of John the Baptist. And a good many of them are waiting for a succinct and definite reply, with an honest desire to get to work.

It is in partial answer to this restless inquiry that I have taken a hesitant pen in hand. I want if I can to show some people who have never thought of it before that there is an intimate relation between men and religion on the one hand, and boys and basket-ball on the other ; that one can readily be made the antecedent of the other ; that a boys' club is a practical evangelistic agency ; and that it is, if definitely developed, a good deal more useful as an auxiliary of the church than it has generally been regarded.

The proper study of mankind is boy, Pope might have told us had he lived a couple of centuries later. Wordsworth seemed to have some of the twentieth century spirit in him when he wrote : " The child is father of the man." " As the twig is bent the tree's inclined," said some other student of nature, human and otherwise. Curiously enough we have until lately rolled these epigrammatic morsels over our tongue without realizing their real intent.

We have let the twig get bent any which

way. We have let the man's father develop much as he chose. For the study of mankind and of boykind we have gone to books, encyclopedias, psychologists. Anywhere but to the boy himself. We are awakening gradually now. Suddenly, we might almost say; for the sweep of boy study which has gone coursing over the land in this last decade has been almost gusty and cyclonic.

There are Lindseys, Forbushes, Chews, Puffers, Halls, Riises, teaching us and leading us as we never dreamed of in the century that but lately closed. As certainly as the end of the fifteenth century marked the discovery of America, the beginning of this twentieth century marks the discovery of the boy.

Nearly everybody recognizes this now. There is no use, as there might have been ten years ago, in devoting these opening paragraphs to the proof that the boy is really of some importance and that he is worthy of polite consideration. Everybody knows this now. The real boy problem is: What are we going to do about it?

A dozen years ago books on the boy were precious few and amazingly valueless. To-day books and magazines and essays about the boy are nearly as thick as Vallambrosa's



leaves. Of making many boy books there soon may be no end. Yet here am I making another. I am bound to explain why.

There will be no psychological study of the boy in this book. There will be a scarcity of theory. It will be primarily a book of methods. And it will try, so far as it can, to answer the honest questions which many men are putting to modern Johns, often nonplussed for a reply: "What shall we do?"

It aims to be practical. It sets forth a plan and it essays to suggest a way in which ordinary boys—ordinary boys, mind you; the typical, average, multitudinous sort—can be developed into good men, in co-operation with the church and on a distinctly and unequivocally religious basis.

## II

### WORK THAT'S BEING DONE

**N**OW the land is full of boys' organizations. They have developed briskly and abundantly, along with boy literature or following it, in the last few years. There are Boys' Brigades, less plentiful than of old, but still thriving. There are Knights of King Arthur far and wide. There are boys' branches of the Y. M. C. A. galore. There are many organized Sunday-school classes of boys. And there are in some highly-favoured cities vast boys' clubs of the mass variety, occupying expensive club houses and sheltering night after night hundreds of boys of the poorer type, catering to them with books and games and gymnastics and industrial classes.

It is of a type of this mass club that I would write ; an unusual type, yet one which I believe will be multiplied, within a couple of years, to the glory of the Christian religion and the strengthening of the church. Before I touch on these mass clubs and their

weaknesses and their strength, let me have a word for other types of boy activity.

The Boy Scouts, for instance.

### THE BOY SCOUTS

Baden Powell with his book on "Scouting for Boys," struck a note that has rung hopefully throughout the world. Other books have followed more to the American taste and more practical from the American viewpoint. But the movement itself, whether started on the far side of the ocean or the near side, by a Baden Powell, a Seton Thompson or a Dan Beard, is one of the most encouraging signs of an awakened age.

The long list of dignitaries on both sides of the sea who lend not only their names but their intelligent coöperation to the movement is cheering to a degree. Scouthood is bound to compel attention, if for no other reason than for its impressive backing and the speed with which it has "caught on."

Of its future only time can tell. It has already exerted a very wholesome influence upon a mass of boys, English, American, Australian, even red, yellow and black. But still more valuable has been its energizing influence upon a type of men who until lately have seemed regardless of boyhood and in-

different to the claims of anybody's boys but their own.

Somewhat akin to Drummond's wide exploitation of the Boys' Brigade movement through his pamphlets called "First" and "The New Method," published twenty years ago, is this Baden Powell book of "Scouting for Boys." The appeal is somewhat different. A careful reader is bound to note this. From scout-craft all suggestion of militarism is removed. The Brigade movement was military throughout. So much to the advantage of the newer movement, which seeks peace and forbids the use of firearms and the weapons of war, even of wooden guns or of edgeless sabres.

But the Boys' Brigade was in its essence a religious movement. In every case there was emphasis upon some church affiliation. The Bible meeting was considered quite as important as the military drill. A Brigade company could not get chartered unless it held a religious meeting once a week and had some church organization as its backer or abettor.

The scout organization is secular, with the religious factor left wholly to the option of the scout-master or local council. The emphasis is upon honesty and courtesy and effi-

ciency. The standard of honour is high, and no boy can become a first or second class scout unless he displays some singular merit of dutifulness or performs some noble act or series of acts of service. But the distinctly religious note is strikingly lacking, both in the Baden-Powell propaganda and its following on this side of the sea. There are thus singular differences between the Drummond method of twenty years ago and the scout method of to-day.

Perhaps the chief hindrance to the immediate and universal success of the scout movement is the lack of proper scout-masters. If a boy is to be turned into a good scout it must be assumed that his proctor has the making of a still better scout. The mentor and adviser of the boys ought to know all that they know, and more. Young men of this type are rare; and the men who have both the leisure and the inclination and the love of boyhood and the intelligence to organize and guide a troop aright are far to seek.

The scout-master may be strong along certain lines and lamentably weak along others. The same difficulty used to present itself in the heyday of the Boys' Brigade. A man capable as a drill master and strict as a dis-

ciplinarian might have defects of character which would make him entirely unfit for the leadership of a distinctly religious organization.

The solution has generally led to a doubling up process, with one leader of the Brigade's military side and one leader of the Brigaders' morals. Perhaps a like doubling up is the solution of some of the Scouts' quandaries. Or perhaps, as the study of boy nature is more wide-spread and the needs of the boys more fully understood, a new race of typical scout-masters will arise and no troop go to pieces for a lack of right leadership.

It is a fact, however, that may well be conceded, that a good many troops have failed from this very cause. Some have died a-borning. Happy the pastor or Sunday-school worker, the school-teacher or the mechanic who understands boy nature, and the secrets of the wood and field, too, and who can measure up to the requirements of scoutdom, and can go trooping with his boy followers wisely and satisfactorily, both to the boys—keen judges of human nature—and to himself, and to the more or less kindly critics who look on. Alas, that there should be so few of them !

## THE BIG BROTHERS

The Big Brother movement may help to develop them. Ernest Coulter formulated a noble and ingenious plan when he set this Big Brotherhood going. How helpful it may have been to the hundreds of boys who have been Big-Brothered I won't hazard a guess. But this is by no means its most important phase. It has, I am sure, been a blessing in disguise—far more a blessing than to the boys themselves—to the hundreds of men—many of them of the leisurely, spiritless, do-nothing sort—who have gone into the Big Brother business.

This is indeed its most important aspect, this setting to work of listless, indifferent young churchmen and arousing their interest in some individual boy who was going, or had gone, wrong. I strongly suspect that Mr. Coulter had much more concern for these cultured, uninspired and doless churchgoers than he had in the unfriended boys themselves. And even if every one of the unfriended boys had finally and complacently gone to the bad—which is a preposterous and wholly unworthy assumption—still would Mr. Coulter have wrought surprising and splendid results in his awakening to a new life and a new sense of duty these hundreds

of young business men who have pledged themselves to Big-Brother somebody. Many of them must be potential scout-masters. Among them many real and practical boy workers must have been developed. Others must be developing now, even as I write.

### THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL CLASS

These are the intensive methods of boys' work. A Scout troop numbers half a dozen or so. A Big Brother brothers but one or two at a time. The teacher of an organized Sunday-school class may have a somewhat wider scope. The class may include a dozen or fifteen or a score. It has often as its head a young woman of tact and earnestness and a real lover of boyhood. How much she knows of the boys' inner selves depends upon what sort of a woman she is. Her zeal often outruns her intelligence. The boys are kindly affectioned to her, in a way. They are inclined to laugh at her in their sleeves if she pets and coddles them. She mentally endows them with graces and virtues to which they are utter strangers. She knows little about their follies and their vices. And she graciously imagines that the hour they spend together on a Sunday afternoon, with an occasional ice-cream treat in the sanctity



of her home, is going to establish them in piety and rank them as saints forever after.

Let me not deprecate the gentle ministrations of good women. Many hundreds of boys have been bettered by contact with the refining influences of womankind. And there are some women whose intelligent study of boy nature makes them superior as helpful friends of boyhood to some cock-sure young lawyer or some grave and venerable doctor. But other things being equal, the boy in his teens had better have for his companion and director one of his own sex.

There is a good deal too much feminizing of the modern boy. Authorities may differ as to whether a boy of secondary and grammar school age will thrive better under a male or a female teacher. It is pretty certain that a boy's recreational activities should be largely guided by men. Organized Sunday-school classes of boys which have other activities than half an hour of weekly Bible study—which go jaunting and camping and ball playing and hiking together during the week—are better off with a strong and valiant and aggressive man at their head.

The number and the scope of these organized classes has been multiplied prodigiously within the last decade. They are undoubt-

edly doing much for the development of the boy. And Sunday-school teaching is undoubtedly much more effective than it was a dozen years ago for this very reason, that the teacher sees more of his boys during the week and delves more deeply into their lives and habits than he ever used to do.

Half an hour of random, listless study of the Bible counts for little unless the Bible is humanized and vitalized by some personal contact and intimate acquaintance. That teacher will teach much better on a Sunday who was playing ball with his boys on the Saturday previous, and who is planning for a moonlight run the following Monday.

### **THE CHURCH CLUB**

There are church clubs, too, which are an expansion of the Sunday-school class idea. They may meet weekly or less frequently for games and debates and songs and some crude boyish business, in the church basement or at the pastor's home. These clubs are good in drawing the boys of a church together and increasing their loyalty to a common effort. But to me they often seem pathetically lacking in something. And by that something I chiefly mean breadth, growth, missionary expansion, the enthusiasm of numbers.

There may be a membership of fifteen or twenty. This represents the boyhood of the Sunday-school. There are some other boys who go to the Sunday-school, to be sure. But their mothers do not want them out after night. Or perhaps they are too rough and are not the sort who would mix well. Maybe they are too young or too old or too good or too bad. Anyway the attendance is scant. The minister's son is the president. It is fair that he should be—the argument runs—since it is his father's church. The other offices are parcelled out with the same instinct of propriety.

It is good in its way. In its particular way I don't see how it could be better. If the world were a vast wilderness and the church a little lodge in the midst of it, it would indeed be admirable. But with the teeming multitude without, with the streets thronged with boys, with the lights of the picture shows and the pool-rooms all a-glitter, with the dive and the brothel just around the corner—the typical boys' club of the typical church, I repeat, is pathetic.

#### THE Y. M. C. A.

The boy is a gregarious animal who loves noise and crowds and excitement and enthu-

siasm. This is gradually getting discovered. The Y. M. C. A. has discovered it with a sudden and delightful start. The development of its boys' department is splendid and amazing. There are hundreds of boys' secretaries now where a few years ago there was none. And the Junior Department is a strong and important feature of the Y. M. C. A. where but lately the boy was regarded as an incumbrance and thrown out as a nuisance.

### III

#### THE Y. M. C. A. IDEA

**H**ERE then is hope. The Y. M. C. A. has discovered the boy. It has trained experts to lead and guide him. It has in some cases special quarters devoted to him. Here plans are made for the treatment of boys by wholesale and at the hands of skilled workers. The difficulties of lay workers, who may lack experience or tact or time, are done away with, and the isolated group which often begins next to nowhere and ends at nowhere at all is replaced by something organic and expert and efficient.

The typical church club has its usefulness in salving the conscience of some of the church workers and preparing them to answer glibly when an otherwise embarrassing question is put to them as to what they are doing for their boys, with an : " Oh, yes, they have a boys' club in their church. It meets weekly," and so on. When this boys' club has continued to meet weekly for a period of

several years it has shown its right to be and developed a genuineness which no man dare deprecate. Far too many of these clubs, starting off with a flourish and a constitution and a set of duly elected officers in November, have no existence whatever when June comes blooming in.

It is surely no fault of the Boy Scouts that the typical scout-master is so hard to find. Indeed this lack but proves the need of Boy Scouts. Baden Powell started his Scouts because good soldiers were so scarce. The good Scouts of to-day will make the good scout-masters of to-morrow.

Meanwhile the Scout movement in many parts of the country is likely to lag and falter except where the boys' own initiative keeps it going. This lively reaction, then, from the days when a small boy, from a Y. M. C. A. view-point, used to be an unmitigated nuisance, is brimful of hope and promise. The very best boy experts of the day are engaged in practical, effective Y. M. C. A. work. They are reaching the heart of the boy far better than most churches are doing. And they are sending the boy from their association atmosphere back to his church a helpfuller, wholesomer, far more practical boy than he would be if he were dependent solely upon church

agencies. Such as the Christian Endeavour Society, for instance.

#### THE BOY AND THE CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOUR

All honour to Francis E. Clark who started this organization and to the thousands who have helped in its development and been benefited through it. But as a means of development of the modern boy it is hopelessly inadequate. The young people of the typical Christian Endeavour Society are those who were young twenty years ago. They still hold on with an enthusiasm worthy of a better cause.

They prefer to do the talking themselves. They do not hand the leadership over to the boys and the girls. Their delight in the movement makes me wonder sometimes why there is not invented a Middle Aged People's Society of Christian Endeavour, where people over twenty-five can find an outlet for their energy and a field for their piety.

It is a pity that these should so invade the ranks of a society organized primarily for the young. And by the young I would suppose was meant those in their teens, or very recently out of them. The chief workers and the most incessant talkers and exhorters and prayers in the young people's societies that

I have known are good men and worthy women who have not had personal acquaintance with their teens for quite a dozen years, to speak charitably.

But this is not all. Even were the young people's society of the modern church to be composed almost wholly of young people, yet would it be a poor sort of a place to develop the moral energy of the typical boy. The modern boy does not think in terms of Pauline theology and is not addicted to pious platitudes. If he utters a bookish prayer or exhorts in the language of the Psalms there is something wrong with the boy. He is a dangerous character. And the older young people who are running the meeting for him had better clutch their purses tightly. The pious boy is a perilous boy. And it is no credit to the church that it has been so long in discovering the fact.

The typical Endeavour Society with a mixture of classes and ages—with the girls giggling over the boys and the boys passing notes to the girls—is no place for the wide-awake, rough and tumble, hurly-burly American boy whom the gentle reader of these lines is supposed to be interested in developing into the straight-eyed, square-shouldered, valiant American man.



If the Endeavour prayer-meeting is a poor place for developing the spiritual energy of the boy, the Endeavour sociable is just about as poor a place for his social development. The boy from twelve years up to sixteen had better be classified by himself. His fun had better be with other boys. A church sociable has its field of usefulness. Its usefulness stops short of the typical boy.

#### THE BOY'S REAL PLACE

The Y. M. C. A., then, is the proper place, with its gymnastic classes and its basket-ball, with its summer camps and its Saturday tramps, with its wise leadership and its intelligent discipline. It is in most communities the ideal place for a boy's upbringing; and every parent who can afford to send his boy thither at five dollars a year, and several extra dollars for gymnasium equipment and camping expenses and the like, should pay the money eagerly and rejoice that he knows where his wandering boy is to-night and every other night.

But here comes in the inevitable obstacle. There are a good many parents who cannot, or think they cannot, afford this five dollars plus per year. A multitude of parents honestly cannot put forth this ten dollars more

or less annually. Another multitude of parents do not see the use of it. To them it seems like rank extravagance. They prefer to let their boy run as he will.

The money he spends for picture shows and lollypops may amount to a good deal more than ten dollars in the course of a year. But the modern parent is not a careful student of values and economies. Ten cents a week for picture shows seems a mere bauble for their boy John. Five dollars a year for a Y. M. C. A. ticket would sound like a riotous extravagance.

### THE SNAG

And here is where the Y. M. C. A. strikes a snag, and must always strike the same old snag. It is the exceptional boy or the son of exceptional parents whom the Y. M. C. A. will gather in. There are hundreds of other boys whom it will not touch, chiefly for the reason that its rates are too high. It cannot lower the rates and be fair to itself and its other patrons.

The average working boy, and the school-boy who will be going to work in a year or so—the worker in shoe factory or paper mill or iron works or paint shop—needs something more than he can get, either through Boy

Scouts or Sunday-school class or Christian Endeavour Society or Y. M. C. A. or all of them combined.

And here steps in the boys' club of the mass variety, which catches boys by the wholesale, fascinates them by its fun, entertains them for a penny or two a week, and if properly managed holds them for years, rearing them from their twelve-year old boyhood into their twenty-one-year old manhood, and befriending in time their wives, and coddling their babies, and giving to their varied household a friendship and an uplift which they could not anywhere else have found.

## IV

### THE MASS CLUB

**T**HIS is a wholesale age. We used to hear of the spacious days of good Queen Bess. Those spacious days seem narrow and puny now by comparison. These telephonic, automobiling, kinematographic and aeroplaning days are the days that throb with life. These are the days of life more abundant. Events crowd thick and fast. Towns grow great and overflowing.

This is a day of gangs in the boy world, sure enough; and a gang may be six or a dozen. You don't have gangs of 150 or a thousand. Hence the mass idea may not appeal to some who will insist upon the group. But the gang can never thrive properly unless it has another gang to go warring against and fighting with.

A gang on a desert island would soon weary of the novelty. As happy as Tom Sawyer's little gang to begin with, it would soon pine for a gang of savages to scalp or get scalped by, and in the absence of such

would lapse into ennui and die of homesickness.

#### GANGS AND GANGS

This is the real boys' club, one made up of gangs and gangs, and every gang warring against every other gang. Not with bricks and putty blowers, but with basket-balls and kindred athletic tools, each gang striving for good-natured mastery over the other, each seeking preëminence in some form of physical or intellectual activity, each striving to win a bowling match or a debate, a checker game or a swimming contest, each striving to jump the highest and to box the best, each priding itself upon the prowess of its leaders and each getting welded into a harmonious whole which yells as one man for the honour of the club, and is ready to dare and do and die in defense of that club's good name.

Here is the modern mass club as it exists in essence in some dozens of towns that you have read about. It used to be insular. It had its birth in Connecticut. It had its growth in Massachusetts. It expanded to New York State and Pennsylvania. It reached out to Chicago and Kansas City and Los Angeles. It is a commonplace now; and when you fare forth to see the goodly cities of the middle and the far West, the

South, the North, the East, your pilot is likely to display a boys' club as one of the town's features which must not be missed.

Many enterprising towns, true enough, have not yet attained to the dignity of a boys' club fit to be put on display. In some towns they forget to mention it. You may spend a year in New York without hearing of Harriman's great boys' club plant. But you are not likely to be in Chicago for a week before you have been piloted to Hull House, which is but a boys' club many times multiplied. And in the lesser towns the boys' club comes foremost. The quarter-million dollar plant in Fall River pilgrims come far to see. Pawtucket's club cost \$100,000, and Springfield's \$65,000, and Germantown's \$70,000, and others in like proportion. Less in most cases than the city's Y. M. C. A., with less grandeur, less dignity, less ornamentation, fewer frills. But compare the cost and the efficiency of the one with the other, and of the returns from the boys' club one need not be ashamed.

#### **CLASS CLUB VS. MASS CLUB**

This is no disparagement of the effectiveness of the Y. M. C. A. But where the Y. M. C. A. corrals its scores, the boys' club

gathers in its hundreds. The Y. M. C. A. is more or less the club home of the classes. It is to the masses that the boys' club makes its appeal. And its appeal is not in vain. It gathers them in and it holds them in a way that must compel the thoughtful observer's attention, and must make the economist and the sociologist pause to think a while.

As I have already shown—and as indeed needs no showing—the Y. M. C. A. must limit its membership to those who can pay, or who are willing to pay, a goodly sum for its varied privileges. The mass boys' club throws its door open to the penniless multitude. And that multitude flocks in with a whoop and a hurrah.

The best of these clubs charge a membership fee of five cents a month, or a dime. And the very best of these insist upon the payment of this fee with rigid exactitude. A free club lacks the solidarity of a paid up club. And the club which is lax and negligent and easy going about the collection of dues, and does not insist when a boy pleads poverty, is likely to breed a spirit of pauperism. The boy who declares he cannot pay five cents for the privileges of thirty days is very likely to have issued from a picture

show just before he told you his pitiful tale. And he may be found engaged in a highly profitable game of craps a few moments later.

It is the clubs that demand dues of their members that develop the finest club loyalty. The club where a boy can come and go with all the freedom of the playground is missing something. And the boy who has no regard for the paying of his dues is not likely to have much regard for the club as an institution or to feel any keen sense of loyalty to its standards.

Now there are clubs and clubs. But the mass club as it exists in such towns as I have here named, and in a number of others, in Waterbury, Pittsfield, Hartford, in New Haven, in Toledo, in Denver, in Albany, is an institution that needs to be reckoned with.

In most cases it deserves a good deal more generous support than it gets. But in most cases, too, its worth is well recognized by the people of the town. Its usefulness is not open to question. And its real value in the molding of character and the development of young citizenship is almost notorious.

Fall River is famous chiefly for its steam-boat line. It is by that means we get to



Boston. But its secondary fame rests upon its boys' club. It has certain minor claims to a fair repute. It is, for instance, the capital of the New England textile industry, with 30,000 people working in its factories. But this claim seems almost puny alongside of the fame that has come to the town through the vastness of its boys' club plant, and the effectiveness of the citizen making that goes on there.

#### THE CHARM OF THE CROWD

Now there need be no apology, I think, for my claim for the superior efficiency of the mass boys' club to almost any other boy-helping institution. Perhaps the comparison is not quite fair. Maybe to contrast a great public school system with a private school of the Groton or St. Paul's stamp might be far fetched. It is not always numbers that count; and the intensive work of the smaller club may outweigh in the long run the crowded and huddled and multifarious labours of the club which in the course of a year touches its hundreds and its thousands.

But I am trying to discuss the most practical means of reaching boys from the standpoint of the church. And I am profoundly convinced—and have been so convinced ever

since as a freshman at Yale, nearly thirty years ago, I dropped into what was perhaps the first boys' club in the country, located in the basement of Connecticut's old State House on the New Haven green—that there is a potency in the big, noisy, multitudinous club of hobbledehoy boys of all shapes and sizes and nationalities and degrees of cleanliness and uncleanness, that cannot be found in the narrow and conventional forms of church and lodge and brotherhood and guild, howsoever thorough may be their methods and however earnest their workers.

## V

### THE BOY WHO WORKS

**B**UT before we go building clubs for boys according to these fixed plans and specifications, let us consider who is this boy and why does he need a club.

First of all we will consider who he is not.

The clubable boy is not the typical high school boy. This high school boy is a good fellow of a sort. He ought to be in the Y. M. C. A., the whole kit of him. In some communities the Y. M. C. A. is so well established in the school as to give tone and force to the entire institution. In some other communities the high school and the Y. M. C. A. have little in common, to the great loss of both. The high school boy is oftentimes a son of well-to-do parents. These parents, if they were properly regardful of his manhood, would take pains to see that his leisure time was well spent. And no better place could they find for the spending of it than the local Y. M. C. A.

In the case of less well-to-do parents almost the same rule would apply. The very fact that a boy can continue his studies when

many of his fellows are going to work indicates a certain measure of prosperity on the part of his household and a modicum of ambition, either in his own bosom or that of his father. This boy needs something more than the routine of his school and the enthusiasm of his school spirit. He needs the gymnastic discipline, the social intercourse, the refining influence and the moral energy of a first-class Y. M. C. A.

But he is not well fitted for the life of the ordinary boys' club. There is not enough democracy about the typical high school boy. That is a pleasing theory about the rich and the poor meeting together, but it often does not work out in modern practice. There is an aristocracy about the high school boy which cannot be ignored.

If not an aristocracy of wealth, then it is an aristocracy of intellect or position. The typical high school boy cannot easily forget the superiority of his erudition. When he goes a little farther and enters college he begins to realize how little he knows. So long as he is in high school and brought in contact with boys of very meagre education, he is likely to "feel his oats" in a marked degree and display his feeling even more markedly.

Now the high school boy is a good fellow,

I repeat, but he is not a good mixer with boys of a different type. He wears a collar mostly and Sunday clothes. He affects the latest thing in nobby hats, and he favours brilliantly hued neckties. These may not really indicate any large amount of opulence upon his parents' part, but they dignify and dandify him in his own imperial view. And they make of him a poor sort of comrade for the boy who works.

It is well enough to try to democratize him and make him remember that all boys are created equal. It is surely good for the high school boy thus to rid him of his snobbery and teach him a regard for his fellow man. But it takes labour and patience and time to do this. A tactful Y. M. C. A. secretary may do it effectively. The boys' club worker has no time for it. His mind is bent upon other things and other types.

There are exceptions to every rule, and the boys' club worker gratefully concedes these. But in most cases he wishes that the high school boy would stay out. And in some instances he must adopt stringent rules to keep him out.

#### NOT FOR THESE

The boys' club then is not built for the

white-collared high school boy of intellectual mien and aristocratic bearing. Nor is it primarily for the boy who works in store or office. These boys have a code of their own. Their occupation requires them to be well dressed. They acquire a certain neatness and smugness from their environment. Some of them, too, are ambitious. They go to night-school, and have a purpose in life. They are looking forward to promotion, and they have acquired a mild air of superiority of which they are rather proud. A certain outward refinement is demanded of them by their employers. Their associations are mostly with clerks, stenographers, saleswomen. They assume a prim gentleness of demeanour and a crude sort of courtesy. They are happier in the company of Miss Jessie at the chiffon counter or Miss Mamie at the cash register than they would be with the rude, rough, boisterous boys who frequent a boys' club.

So a club is not for these. Nor yet is it for the quiet boy of domestic tastes who after school or work takes his book under the sitting-room lamp, and proceeds to read and read until bedtime. This boy is exempt from our present problems. The boy who likes his home and who prefers to remain there

while other boys are roaming far afield does not require much looking after. He is an unusual boy, though, and a remarkable one. The good reader may know just how to deal with this type. I don't.

Having excluded from our consideration the high school boy and the store boy and the office boy and the home boy—though in each of these classes there must be, of course, the inevitable exception—there is a multitude of other boys deserving of the public's patient and thoughtful and generous consideration. And it is these boys, unreached by the Y. M. C. A., untouched by the church, uninfluenced by the home, unaffected by other agencies, who need an evening club life, and of whom this club life may be the making.

### NOT STREET BOYS

Please do not call them "street boys." They have been called this by eminent authority. It is unfair and unkind. Many of them may spend much time in the street sure enough. But they are not vagrants or waifs. They are not boy tramps, nor are they lacking in comfortable homes. Their parents may be very decent people. But the boy who hangs on the corner of an evening, or who wanders up and down the street looking

for trouble, or who makes a round of show going, or who loiters about the pool-room—these are typical working boys, and they are proud to be called so. They do not like to be called “street boys.” And they do not deserve to be so called.

It is a large and a very numerous and a widely inclusive class. It extends from the truant and the train jumper and the petty thief and the loafer by easy stages up to the self-respecting and wide-awake boy who is learning a trade, and who is industriously counting the days until he shall be a full-fledged journeyman.

There are many differences between these boys; differences of race and nationality, of colour, of religious connection, of temperament, of education, of manliness, of strength, of stamina. But they are all alike in being boys who work for their living, or who, being under the legal age now, will soon be at work.

There is a class consciousness among them which unifies them. There is a togetherness of interest which makes them eagerly responsive to the right sort of a spirit of the right type of a club.

They shoulder their dinner kettle around 6:30 A. M. and hie them cheerily to their labour. It is factory work for the most part,



and they go to it joyously enough. Never a thought have they about the tyranny of toil or the severity of their task. The length of hours does not bother them much. The scantiness of pay may be to them something of a consideration. But even this does not worry them greatly if they get—as most of them do get—a large proportion for their Saturday spending. They enjoy the hilarity of the workshop. The noise and the bustle of it is fun to them. They like the comradeship and the raillery. And they are rarely affected by the spirit of truancy which used to grip them hard when they were school-boys.

#### WORK AND SCHOOL

Just why a boy should find five hours in school five days in a week an extremity of torture, to be shunned and fled from and heartily detested, while ten hours a day at work for six days of the week is accepted as a matter of course, and even a sort of pleasure, I never have been able to understand. But it is a fact in thousands of instances.

It may show there is something wrong with the boy. It may prove that something is still more wrong with the school. Anyway it is a concrete and emphatic fact. And compulsory education laws and newly revised

factory laws do not seem to be doing much to alter it.

But willingly as the average boy goes to his work, and little as he complains about the burden of it or the length of it, he has ideas of his own as to his leisure. He is his own boss when he returns, dirty and hungry and a bit tired, to his supper. He has no inclination for chores then. He is not expecting to wash the dishes or mind the baby. He is not contemplating a seat by the stove with a newspaper or a volume of history. Nor has he any thought of a game of chess with his sister.

He eats in a hurry and he is gone in a flash ; and the mother may as well make up her mind to it. In thousands of homes she expects nothing less. The boy is a working boy now and contributes by his ten hours of factory toil to the family treasury. When those ten hours are done he bosses himself. He goes where he will and stays as long as he likes. He prefers not to be questioned as to where he is going or where he has been. He may, if pressed too closely, talk back and respond that it is "nobody's business." Generally he is not pressed. The family recognizes that it is nobody's business without waiting to be told. He has a key of his own,

probably, or the door is left open for him. And so long as he gets into bed some time and is on hand for his breakfast and his start to work, there is no complaining and no word of suspicion.

He may be good-natured enough. This typical factory boy generally is that. He is not gruff or churlish or surly or unkind. He displays a sort of half courtesy to his mother, and even likes to dandle the baby a bit, and stops before he trots out to join the boys on the corner to administer to the littler children some good-natured teasing.

But he resents nagging. He does not want to be followed up. He thinks he has a divine right to go to the "show," or to smoke a pipe, or to hang out on the corner, or to visit the pool-room, or even to "rush the can" without any extraordinary interference, seeing that he is working steadily and is bringing his pay envelope home every Saturday and throwing it into his mother's lap unopened.

#### AFTER SUPPER: WHERE?

Now where does this boy go when supper is done? It may be, if cash is scarce, simply to the near-by corner, where he and kindred cashless spirits spend a gossip evening together. They smoke a bit and guy the cop

a little and swear a good deal. They hand out cheerful badinage, some of it of a non-printable character, to the girls they know, who make a point of passing frequently, and tarrying a while, maybe. They may grow cold presently and go sauntering up-town. Here they will look in the store windows and study the picture show posters. They will linger on the curbstone a while and cast remarks at other girls, whom they don't know intimately like those of their own neighbourhood, but to whom no introduction seems necessary. They will go home to bed presently. But not before their house is darkened and the rest of the household turned in. They might be laughed at by their cronies otherwise. They might even, if they did this too often, be dropped from the gang.

In the early fall as the evenings grow colder they will be likely to plan for a "bum shanty." This may be located in an unused shed in a back yard of one of the gang's convenient and obliging relatives. Or they may find a bit of a stable attic somewhere, which they can secure at the modest rental of a dollar or so a month. They can buy a stove and a lamp and a chair or two cheap. They can pick their coal along the railroad. And a couple of soap boxes and pictures from the

sporting pages of the Sunday paper will complete the furnishing.

Here six or eight of them will be supremely happy. They can smoke and play cards; neither of them desperately wicked occupations, but suggestive of things both better and worse. And they can—and they will—on a Saturday night if all goes well—meaning if there is money enough and a handy older person ready to be *particeps criminis* and do the actual buying—have a kettle or several of beer, or even on state occasions a half-pint bottle of whiskey.

They may shoot craps furtively and economically. The winner will scarcely be more than fifty cents richer or the loser more than twenty-five cents poorer when the long evening is done. No one probably will be intoxicated. There will only be a gentle feeling of exhilarated gaiety and a realizing sense of budding defiance.

#### NOT A DEN OF THIEVES

It won't be a den of thieves probably, this "bum shanty." The coal may be stolen and there may be some very mild pilfering of other things. But for the most part these shanty boys are not thieves at all.

Nor are they, despite their gambling and

their drinking, real rascals. They are not, with all their smut and their profanity, deep-dyed villains. They are just boys who are fond of sport. Vide the Sunday supplement pictures, which consist not of Mona Lisas and Turner sunsets, but of heroes of the prize ring, of monarchs of the diamond, of the principal characters in local basket-ball and Marathon running history.

Most of their athleticism, though, is by proxy. They have no place for practicing athletics. There is a punching bag or a set of boxing gloves sometimes in their shanty equipment. But for the most part these things are too costly and too short-lived, and their quarters moreover too narrow for any such practice.

Further, these things tend to noise. The kindly relative, from whom they rent the shanty at a dollar a month, strictly in advance, has warned them against noise. So they devote themselves to more peaceful pursuits, and play their poker in silence, smoke their pipes in quietude, and drain their can of beer with bated breath.

The shanty does not last long. If it has its beginning in October it is rarely running by Christmas time. The rent money came too slowly, or there was too much noise in

their revels, or the cop found them out, or some other dire disaster drove them back to the street. It may have been a row over dues. This was probably the leading cause of dissolution. The boy who earned most at poker and who drank deepest of the growler was the one who contributed the least to the general fund.

These are the ways of the shanty and these the habits of the typical boy. They vary much and often. Sometimes the shanty is a real robbers' den. Sometimes the lads tire of their usual occupation and invite a girl or two to lend variety to their revelry. These things lead to police discovery and neighbourhood scandal, and finding their way into the papers, set a pious community aghast at the depravity of youth.

#### A FORGETFUL PUBLIC

The aghastness lasts long, almost to the next day in fact, when some other more pressing news looms up and the community forgets with cheerful promptness that its boys are going to the bad, that many of them have already gone, that a conspicuous reason for their going is the lack of proper scope for their physical energy and a decent place for their play ; that a wise community would

see the importance of furnishing to boys who have been working all day in shop or factory some better sort of place to spend their evenings than dances and picture shows, brothels and bum shanties, pool-rooms and street corners.

I have not here cited the dance hall and the pool-room and the brothel, for I have supposed our boy is too young for these resorts. We are talking here of the boy of fourteen to sixteen. But in this boy's gang there are likely to be companions of thirteen and others of seventeen. Some of these will find ready admittance to the pool-room and will there acquire habits dangerous and expensive. The boy of fourteen habitually scorns the dance idea and flouts the girls. The same boy at fifteen may be girl-crazy and dance-possessed. From the pool-room to the dance hall and to the brothel is a very direct and easy route. And while I have no thought of being an alarmist, and am simply writing of the typical working boy, it is fair to state that the brothel's favourite victims are sometimes but knickerbockered lads who no longer haunt the corner, the shanty and the picture shows because deeper depths have swallowed them.



## VI

### THE QUEST OF FUN

**N**OW this is a random picture of the working boy and his leisure. The working boy not of one town or one state but of hundreds of towns in many states. There are bound to be differences of local conditions. In some towns there is the curfew law, a futile attempt to dam up an overflowing Niagara. In some there's a social centre in a schoolhouse. In some towns boys will go to night-school or prayer-meeting in sheer lack of any place else to go. In some towns the evening mischief takes one form, in some towns quite another. But in nearly all the main situation is the same. There is a raft of boys, good, bad and indifferent, who have been working for nine or ten or eleven arduous hours. They have enjoyed their work in a way. Even the breaker boys in the coal regions are cheery and gay through much of the day. But it has been hard work, racking, wearying, even though they do not realize it. When

night comes they want something different. And they will get it without fail.

They do not demand it of the community. For the most part they feel quite competent to provide it for themselves. Perfectly happy are they in being chased round the block by the cop. The quintessence of joy is theirs to go swiping things from the corner grocery; to hop on coal trains and go speeding far down the road is fairly heavenly.

The good soul who bewails the corner boys' lack of pleasure is likely to be barking up the wrong tree. "Poor little lads," said one such, symbolic of them all. "They never have any pleasure." But don't you believe it, as the boys themselves would reply. The boy's pleasure is intense and perennial. There is no end and no limit to his fun.

The problem that I am presenting is not how to give him a happier time than he now enjoys in his train jumping, his poker playing, his show going, his till tapping, his cop teasing. What I am after is a more respectable and rational form of fun, one that will lead elsewhere than to the prison and have its finale in something better than trouble and sin and remorse; a form which will presently appeal to him as infinitely preferable to all other forms, yet which he had never really

yearned for until it was thrust upon him, and the enjoyment of which astonishes him vastly and makes him wonder at his own swift and sudden transformation.

These working boys will have their fling and their fun. There are hundreds of commercialized institutions begging them to come and spend their time and their money within. As Miss Addams has strikingly outlined in her very remarkable book, the very men who pay these boys to do their work by day beg of them in siren fashion to come and give their money back at night.

The history of some pay envelope money would be decidedly interesting. Here's a quarter, let us say, paid out to a boy by a large manufacturer on a Saturday afternoon. A week later it is back again in that manufacturer's till. The boy went seeking joy with that quarter on a Saturday night. He sought it at the theatre or the pool-room or the dance hall or the saloon. All these agencies exist for the express purpose of luring the boy to spend and spend. The manufacturer is largely interested in these recreational activities; if not directly, then as a stockholder or a silent partner or a landlord. And so the money, not of one boy only, but of a multitude of boys, comes creep-

ing back via the pool palace or the dancing academy. And the prudent manufacturer burns the candle profitably at both ends.

### WHAT OF THE BOY?

But what of the boy? Is there no form of recreation save what he can pay for in money or in peril or in loss of character?

There's not much. And yet I can show unto you a more excellent way. For here steps in the boys' club, which is rational from every view-point. The boys themselves are tickled to death with it and gladly forego the shanty and the corner and the more garish delights of the town's main street for its gymnastics and its sociability and its organized play; and—more powerful than all—the sense of ownership and the notion, not that they belong to it, but that it belongs to them.

To the onlooker it is just as reasonable. Few people who look into this boys' club business fail to be impressed with its practicalness, its profitableness and its comparative economy.

The onlooker, true, is likely to see in this tangled mass of noisy boyhood, which any well organized boys' club presents on any night of any week, only an opportunity for

preaching and teaching and "improving."  
Your whilom visitor will be pining, five minutes after his entrance, to have you gather the mob of happy urchins into a corner where he may benevolently address them upon the beauties of nature or the depravity of mankind.

#### A GOOD TIME IN A RESPECTABLE WAY

"The object of this club," starts off the constitution of one club I am acquainted with, "is to teach boys how to have a good time in a respectable way." It is an old constitution which has done duty for quite a dozen years. Some other parts of the constitution have had to be revised. But this opening paragraph never. The club has in its day shown hundreds of boys how to have a good time in a respectable way. And, almost without half trying, as a by-product, it has through the respectability of its good times made of some of these boys far better, cleaner, soberer men than the street corner, the pool-room and the vaudeville show could ever have done.

These boys will forsake the corner if they are given something better than the corner. And they will forego their train-jumping habits if there is some nobler form of athletics

held out to them. They will go Marathon running with perfect and insistent regard for the rules of the game, in place of setting the cop a-chasing them round the corner, if they are given a proper opportunity. And they will throw a baseball with unerring accuracy and put a shot with strength and skill instead of throwing stones through neighbours' windows and firing brickbats at passing trains, if there is a little wise direction and gentle discipline to show them how and give them a fair chance.

This sort of thing has been said aforetime as a plea for playgrounds. It is far more convincing and practical as an argument for the boys' club. The discipline of the playground, being outdoor discipline, and confined mostly to two or three summer months, is far less complete than the discipline of the indoor club. And when the boys from an indoor club are let loose upon a summer playground, even a grumpy observer, as blind as a bat and as deaf as an adder, can see the difference between the clubbed boy and the unclubbed boy ; between him who has learned loyalty and fair play and agility and other club-given qualities on the gymnasium floor, and him whose school of discipline has been located in other parts,

## VII

### THE CLUB AND THE CHURCH

**T**HIS club idea is a pretty theory, but it is also a very well proven practice. This mass club idea has gone far and wide. It has been developed in various towns, and it has been over and over again a strong and valued help to mayor and probation officer, truant teacher and judge.

It has helped to make the policeman's task a truly happy one. It has helped to clean up parts of some cities. It has promoted good citizenship. It has hindered the progress and prevalence of the saloon. It has had a civilizing effect in many directions. Has it done aught for the church? Has it been a real factor in a town's Christianization?

Not as much as it might. Not nearly so much as I believe it will do in the years that are coming. "No religion and no politics allowed in this club," is a sign literally or figuratively written over various boys' clubs that I have known. It is a mistaken sign, I believe. If not mistaken as regards these particular clubs, at least mistaken as a rule of faith and

practice for other clubs otherwheres, and clubs that are yet to be.

#### THE CHURCH BASEMENT PLAN

Of the nice little, neat little, polite little, very little church club conducted sleepily and decorously in the church basement, and confining its membership to the good boys of a particular church, whose grand total may reach almost twenty, I have my opinion. I have set it down briefly on another page. I need not dilate upon it here. But the great big, noisy, limitless church club, which bars out none and forbids nobody, unless it be the very, very good boys who would find it anyway as distressing and cheerless as a demon might find heaven—that is a very different affair.

And it is not an impossible affair at all. A club of this sort may be made not only a conserver of the church's boys, but a direct feeder of the church's strength. It may be made an actual blessing to the wide community. And there need be no temporizing sign across the door barring out religion as if it were a cursed thing.

With a proper appreciation of values, basket-ball and Bible study may be linked cordially hand in hand. And the gaiety of a gymnasium may become a very decided



fosterer of a practical morality and an aggressive Christianity.

#### AN EVERY-NIGHT RESORT

No one church—or scarcely any—can do this of itself in connection with its own church organization. A basket-ball hall in the church basement is a poor apology for the broad, expansive work which I am here outlining. As a half step it is good ; far better than nothing. But this sort of club that I plan for must be, not a provider of fit amusement once in a while; a night or two a week or when the room is not needed for other purposes. A boys' favourite street corner, a boys' beloved shanty, a boys' gang, welcome him night after night, "a thousand years the same." Half an hour on a Sunday afternoon is not enough time to obliterate the impressions of a week long. Nor is one night a week sufficient. There are six other nights. Where will your wandering boy be then ?

The clubable boy wants a place of resort for four or six or seven nights. And if your club can gather him in eagerly and delightedly four or six or seven nights a week for a year or three or half a dozen, your club is making an impression upon that boy which all the ravages of time cannot efface, which

the allurements of the street and the workshop cannot overpower, and which are bound to be the most impressive of all the formative influences of a crowded, checkered, tumultuous life.

This is what the boys' club has done and can do. If that boys' club draws away from the narrow idea of: "This club for our church boys only; only good boys admitted here;" and from the timid policy of: "All boys welcome here; there's nothing to pay; and we won't ask your politics or talk religion to you"—and shall strike the happy, middle-road of becoming a vital, Christianizing force, regardless of the inevitable charges of proselytism, yet with due regard for the consciences of all and a true fairness and reverence towards the religious beliefs of the boys and their parents, a great work of conservation may be wrought, which will be well worth the money and energy put into it.

## VIII

### THE MAKING OF A CLUB

**B**UT if not in the church basement, where and how? If this is to be a magnet for a multitude of boys from the neighbourhood and far beyond, what is there about it that is magnetic, and how is it thus to radiate influence?

Let me tell briefly and specifically. This is to be a man-making institution. But remember the good old recipe for rabbit pie: "First catch your rabbit." To make men you must first catch boys. You must bait your trap well. You must study the ways of rabbit and boy, and give to each the very thing they like.

— You must have heat and light to begin with, plenty of both. An abundance of water, too, though you may not think it. The typical boy is supposed to shun clean water as the devil shuns the holy variety. This is a fiction and a slander. The boy has not been given half a chance. He loves a shower bath equally with a swimming pool; perhaps a little more so.

Only the swimming pool is handy and abundant in the summer time. The shower bath is rare and scarce. Its water is mostly cold and its environment dingy. Such a shower bath as he knows in his workshop or such a tub as may be a feature of his home equipment does not allure. But give him a modern shower with plenty of soap and a good heavy towel to boot, and make this a club privilege—not a duty, mind you—and he will revel in it nightly and be grateful to you forever.

There must be other features of your magnetic club besides heat and light and water. But these are essential. You cannot dispense with either. You must have floods of light if your club is to be a real purveyor of cheer. It must be good and warm, with no stint of coal through all the winter. There will be baths by the thousand if you are wise enough to encourage them.

### GYMNASIUM COMES FIRST

There must be plenty of room moreover. A small building has its uses. A large one multiplies them greatly. The gymnasium is the principal thing, and this ought to be quite sixty feet long and fifteen feet high. Its width should be proportionate. And it

should be regarded as the very heart and soul of the establishment.

Here is the seat of basket-ball warfare, and here the scene of incessant contest. Here will there be races and bouts galore, and here will be gymnastic drills of eminent quality. Here in their musical drills will the boys learn the poetry of motion and the beauty of discipline. Here the wild romps of the street corner will be tamed into beauty of form and precision of energy. Here the random stunts of the untamed street urchin will become the dignified and orderly performance of the regulated class. Here your athletic professor, howsoever strong and wise he be, may stand aside and beam with delight while a couple of his newly tamed rascals lead the others through ambitious performances on horse and bars and buck and rings.

They have a new desire and a fresh ambition now. They want to learn like the others. They await their turn with visible eagerness. They make their effort with zealous desire. If successful, they receive the applause of their fellows with the pride of a peacock. If they blunder, and get chaffed and laughed at, they retire with a confusion that does not mean failure, but which reveals

a sturdy determination to do much better next time.

And then when there is enough of this—when the apparatus work is ended, and the rhythmic drill with dumb-bells or free-hand exercises, a touch of dancing or a serpentine run, every foot falling in perfect harmony to the tune of “Yankee Doodle”—there is a rush for basket-ball. Impromptu teams are organized sooner than you can cry “Jack Robinson.” And the combat is on with all the fury of a Waterloo and all the hilarity of a Venetian carnival.

It takes ten boys to play basket-ball and it takes a hundred to root. The ten are soon exhausted with the arduousness of their pace and ready to give way to the next combatants, while they fall into the ranks of rooters, or, more likely still, flee to the shower baths and riot madly in a deluge of water and a luxury of cleanliness.

#### **WILD BARBARIANS AT PLAY**

Thus you watch the wild barbarians at play through a long and noisy evening, noting their deference to the referee's decision, marvelling at their perfect compliance with the blast of his shrill whistle, joying in their wild war-whoops and echoing their spirited

enthusiasm. It is rough and tumble, helter-skelter, hurly-burly sure enough. Yet it is all according to plan, and it is all with a fixed purpose. They are playing by rule, and they obey the rules gladly.

They may pout a moment and sulk a bit over a particularly unpopular decision of the referee. But they are all smiles again a moment later. Their comrades won't stand for sulks. The referee will retire them if they sulk too far or too boldly.

There is no room for sulkiness in a rattling basket-ball game. It is a precursor of good nature and the maker of comradeship. It beats any game going. For team work there is nothing like it. It fosters the gang spirit and cements it. And I believe it is one of the mightiest means of grace in this very resourceful age.

Every boy likes to play basket-ball. Some of them play much better than others, and the less skillful are naturally relegated to the rear. But they will play despite that; awkwardly and furtively at first; with boldness and ability presently; swiftly and acceptably at length.

It is very remarkable how the boy who never saw a basket-ball gradually acquires a skill and power in the handling of it. Boys

who have thus progressed along basket-ball lines love to prate of it and glory in it. They delight in recalling how a few months since they were slow and inept and unsuccessful. They like to realize their growing power, and to look forward with hopeful glee to the greater skill of the coming year. They like to record the goals they have made, counting them up on their fingers, treasuring them up in their memories, even writing them down in shabby note-books and carrying them close to their aspiring hearts.

#### A GROWTH IN MORALS

This is the way, too, that a rough and ready boy may grow in morals and manliness. This is the way that he may pride himself on that growth. It is thus that strength of character will develop and old habits be cast off. With no smug complacency or genial self-righteousness, but with a genuine gladness he will look back a few months—it seems years to him—into the abyss of his former idealless self and rejoice over his new-found vision and his freshly acquired hope.

Basket-ball is distinctly and decidedly a moral game. The listless onlooker, the unimaginative critic, the spineless physical director, the well-meaning but dull, blind par-



son may see in it nothing but frolic and noise. But out of it are the issues of life. Centred in it is the germ of a real Christian manhood. Basket-ball and the boy bears an intimate relation to religion and the man. Follow it up and see.

There are other parts to this club building, though they are of minor importance. A big auditorium is not needed. If it is, the gymnasium, with a platform at one end of it, is sufficient. Nor is a large and splendidly equipped library a needful feature. These boys that you have gathered in are not supposed to be diligent readers. There is a town library probably. They like to look at pictures, and magazines are in order. Some story books will be useful, and games of divers sorts. A piano is good, and picture puzzles. Checker-boards will be kept busy, and more ambitious games will fit in well. There may even be bowling-alleys if there is room and money for them. A swimming pool would not be amiss, though neither alleys nor pool are essential.

Your big gymnasium is essential, and your shower baths and your heat and your light. There are some other things, highly regarded in some quarters, which to me seem far less important. Industrial classes, for instance,

are good things in their way. Debating clubs have their virtues. Classes of various sorts may be desirable, but these are not the principal thing. The boys learn industry in their workshop and debating at school.

We are aiming principally to give boys a good time in a respectable way. Their good time may be found in a cobbling class, or in a debate on town versus country, or in a practical talk on the care of the teeth. But it is for fun the working boy is looking chiefly when supper is done. And it is by giving him a wealth of noisy and exuberant fun that you are going to catch him and hold him.

### **FUN IS FOREMOST**

The other things may follow in due course, but recreation must be foremost. Give him an abundance of this, deluge him with it, show him that here he can have more of it in quantity and quality than he can get any place else, and he will make this his abiding place. The corner that knew him will know him no more. Even the "show" will receive from him scant courtesy. Here he will spend seven nights of every week. And here he will, half unconsciously, but very certainly, absorb ideals and notions and ambitions which never entered his foolish noddle before.

I have outlined our needed equipment. There need be no more of it than this, save for one most important factor—that is the man who runs it all. He cannot be an ordinary man. Nor must he be such an extraordinary one as to be above his task or remote from the boy's heart and understanding.

The young athlete who is desperately in love with the work he is doing is the right sort. A university education may be a handicap. Even an advanced knowledge of psychology and a course in pedagogics may be an impediment. A little learning is a dangerous thing. The man with mighty little of it, but a real zeal for his work and an intelligent comprehension of what he is up to and of the nature of his tools and his materials, is more useful than savant or pundit.

Thomas Chew left school and went to the workshop at the age of eleven. He is the most expert boys' clubber in America to-day. I shudder to think of the consequences if Thomas Chew had gone through high school and taken a three years' course in metaphysics. He might have taken degrees and things, but probably the world would never have heard of him, and the Fall River Boys' Club would be yet unborn.

The plant is important. I am emphatic

here. Garfield and Mark Hopkins and a log may make a very complete university. There must be something more than this for the proper boys' club. The woods and the fields are not enough. The church basement, with its grumbling sexton and its fussy Ladies' Aid Society and its immaculately beaming parson, who thinks that in repayment for one night of crokinole the boys ought to give three weeks of devoted attention to his revival services, is inadequate and unsatisfactory.

There must be for the real carrying out of this plan a considerable plant and a large equipment. But the chief factor is the man in charge. Gymnasium and shower baths and bowling-alleys and all will prove futile and nugatory unless there is the right sort of man to handle the boys, and to train them in the way that they should go and set before them the life that they should lead.

## IX

### IN UNION IS STRENGTH

**B**UT no church can ever afford such an elaborate plant or pay for its running expenses. This is the impatient criticism I will hear from those who have followed me patiently enough up to this point.

This is hardly so. A good many churches might afford it if they adjusted their expenditures accordingly, or if they taxed their members a little nearer the limit of their capacity. A hundred thousand dollar church is nothing unusual nowadays. A \$2,000 choir, organist and all, is quite a commonplace. A \$10,000 plant for the upbuilding of boys, with a yearly expense of \$1,500, a good third of which the boys would pay themselves, does not sound to me like an impossibility.

But I am ready to concede for the sake of argument that it is impossible. For this is not what I am suggesting ; that a church here and there should erect a boys' club of this sort, maintained as its individual institution. There are churches here and there that can go in and do go in for this sort of thing. The great plants of St. George's and St. Bar-

tholomew's in New York are instances, the Brick Church Institute in Rochester, and some others through the West that you have heard about. But these are extraordinary and exceptional, and are likely to always remain so. Maybe it is best that they should so remain.

We are not talking of the heavily endowed and largely capitalized church that thrives here and there. It is the typical average church, the small church if you please, anyway the ordinary, the every-day church, that we have in mind. And we may as well take for granted that this ordinary, every-day church could not go constructing great gymnasiums solely for the use of the town's working boys if they would, or would not if they could.

#### **WORKING IN UNION**

But a union of churches, pooling their issues and constructing a church where Baptist and Presbyterian would hobnob peaceably, and Lutheran and Episcopalian would battle cheerfully, and Methodist and heathen—especially the heathen, for they are assumed to be in great preponderance in this ideal club—would chum together in happy oblivion of creedal differences and catechetical distinctions.

A union of churches could erect and main-

tain a club of this sort without any considerable strain upon their treasuries and with much resultant satisfaction. There is no good reason why this boys' club should not closely follow the Y. M. C. A. in many details of its organization and be a strongly and avowedly Christian institution without any tinge of sectarianism or any allegiance to a particular denomination or any predominance of Methodists or Lutherans or what not in its conduct or control.

Even as I write I read that as a result of the Men and Religion campaign in Kansas City an institution of this sort is to be founded, a number of churches in one part of the town uniting to build an evening home for their own boys and the boys of other churches and the boys of no church; with particular emphasis, let us hope, on the boys of no church.

In Philadelphia there has existed for years an organization somewhat akin to this, a so-called Boys' Brotherhood, conducted by a dozen or more churches as a general gathering place for those churches' boys and a place of wholesome resort with athletics as its chief stock in trade.

Here each boy member pays twenty-five cents a month for the privileges of the build-

ing. And here one church meets another in friendly combat, and one set of boys stimulates another set not only to athletic excellence but to church allegiance and Brotherhood loyalty.

There are in Chicago and elsewhere such things as inter-church athletic unions, in which the boys from one Sunday-school will battle joyously against the boys of another. These unions have their uses and their successes. But far more useful and successful would they be were there a common meeting place, an equality of opportunity as regards gymnastic apparatus and equipment, some place where all might be equal, yet retaining their individuality and separateness.

In a Y. M. C. A. they might thus meet if all could afford to. But all cannot afford to, as must be repeatedly emphasized. A separate church gymnasium is a poor substitute for this general rendezvous. There are few churches that can afford a gymnasium of their own. There are almost none that can afford an ample and adequate one.

#### A WIDER PURPOSE

A little play room for the young people of the parish is growing more or less common now. It may be dubbed a gymnasium and



may have a really useful purpose. But it is a narrow purpose and a circumscribed one. It reaches a very little coterie, most of them the young people who need no reaching. Its open season is bound to be limited. There can be no noisy play there while a missionary meeting is being conducted in an adjoining room or while the Ladies' Dorcas Society is stitching away above.

One worthy pastor of my acquaintance, who was something of a pioneer along church gymnasium lines, permitted no basket-ball through the forty days of Lent. As if the boy from the street corner could see the significance of a Lenten abstention from basket-ball, when the show houses were ever open and the pool-rooms in full blast !

This club house had better not be hard by the church. It may be half a mile or more from all the churches united in its management, without any loss of power and with some increase of usefulness. Enticing the unchurched to come to your church gymnasium, if it is a part of the church plant, is much like putting salt on a bird's tail. If you can get near enough to touch its tail you are near enough to catch the bird. A corner boy is likely to shun a church gymnasium much as Æneas shunned the gift-bearing

Greeks. The bait is too apparent and the hook too obvious.

The boy who dreads the church is the one you are presumably angling for. It will pay you to angle wisely while you are about it. If half a score of churches should occasionally unite in their zeal for boy catching, and if they should lay aside their interdenominational spats, and if they should not expect too much at the very outset, and if each should be satisfied with its fair share of the proceeds—if they should agree to do no quarrelling over which boy belonged to whom—they could achieve a good work whose fruit-bearing might long continue.

And it will be distinctly a religious work, too. There need be no apology for this and there need be no subterfuge about it. It must not be too glaring surely. It must not resemble the rolls and coffee of a Sunday Breakfast Association which have their inevitable conclusion in song and sermon. You can't invite your corner boys for half an hour of basket-ball, and retain them for an hour and a half of preaching. There must be a voluntariness about the religious side of your work, or all will be lost. There must be as much spontaneity about it as there is about your athletics.

There can be no compulsory attendance at Sunday-school or no forced pledge as to temperance. Smokers must be just as welcome as non-smokers. Rather more so. For it is the smoking crowd you are after. The boy who swears prodigiously on his first visit is the one you must hope will call again and again. He is likely to be your chaplain or your president a few weeks hence. It would be a sin and a shame to cast away such promising material.

You must stand pat as to your own religious convictions. But you are not here to corral Hebrews and make them over into Methodists. Your plan must not be to turn Catholics into Baptists. You must have a due regard for the religious or non-religious predilections of all your visitants.

And yet there is no use in letting the creed of these visitants shut you up like a clam or drive you out of your proper business of religious teaching. You can adopt in this respect the very wise policy of the Y. M. C. A., which has hundreds of boys and men of Catholic and Hebrew parentage upon its rolls, yet which wisely steers clear of offense.

These boys can stay away from your meetings if they like, or if parents or priest or rabbi insist. You will certainly not find fault

with that absence. You will urge upon them submission to their parents and their ecclesiastical authorities.

But by paying due deference to their religious upbringing and their prejudices you will not in this work that I am outlining allow those prejudices to silence your needed message to others or to eliminate the religious note from your enterprise. You will patiently suffer the loss of every Hebrew and Catholic in your neighbourhood rather than permit them to alter the spirit of your labour or to drive from it the very essence of its purpose.

In some communities this will be comparatively easy because of the absence of warring religious elements. Where the surrounding neighbourhood is mostly Protestant you will have practically no difficulty. Where the environment is very largely Catholic and Hebrew there will be difficulties, but not such difficulties as cannot be mastered.

#### **A PLAN OF COÖPERATION**

I cannot see, for instance, why the coöperation of priest and rabbi should not be invited and why the services designed for Protestant boys could not be offset by others conducted by a rabbi and priest. Or if this is impracticable and if there is such a preponderance of

alien religions as to reduce the Protestant boys to a tiny minimum, still I fail to see why the essential truths of Christianity—truths upon which all churches are bound to agree—should not be set plainly and frequently forth in lessons of temperance and purity and reverence and obedience.

As a matter of fact in some of the most successful boys' clubs in the country these things are but vaguely and infrequently referred to. They are remotely taken for granted. They are not drummed in and driven home. There is a timidity about the club management which seems to lack a fit excuse.

They may be fearful of offending some alien church father, or of driving some substantial contributor from the subscription books, or of inviting the criticism of some municipal authority. If the boys' club is to be a purely secular institution, no fair criticism can be made and this timidity must be regarded as genuine wisdom. But if this boys' club is to be a Christianizing force it is weak and wrong to trust wholly to suggestion and atmosphere and occasional platitude. If we believe that the cross of Christ is the sign by which the world is to be conquered, we must uphold this cross without embellishment or

disguise or apology in the clubs wherein we seek to make clean, straight men out of crude and foul and reckless boys.

No proselyting, please. No zeal, I repeat, for making Christians of Jewish boys or Protestants of Roman Catholics. Far better that these boys should remain apart and outside forever than that this should seem to be the labour and the aim.

Catholics and Hebrews may absorb much of the spirit of a truly religious club without being drawn into its Protestant formulas. And I do not believe that broad priest or conscientious rabbi could find aught to censure in a boys' club of distinct Protestant direction which fashioned itself after the manner of the Y. M. C. A.

### **THE MANLY APPEAL**

The manner of this club's religious teaching need not be set forth in detail. It will work itself out in its own way. It must be decisive, emphatic, straight from the shoulder. There must be nothing white-livered or weak-kneed or spineless about it. It must appeal to the boys' militant side and must be of heroic mold throughout.

It must express itself in terms of boy life and must deal with common, every-day

occurrences. To study Bible texts analytically or to delve into the hidden meanings of profound Scriptural passages would be worse than useless. Worse than useless, I say, for it would turn the boy away from the very Book which you are pining to lead him towards.

The Old Testament stories will do much to bring him your way if you study the dramatic side of the incidents and bring the meaning of them down to this very date. Gideon and Samson and Elijah and David can be made very real to the modern boy if told in graphic language. And the moral that is wrapped up in their thrilling histories can be driven home almost without half trying.

Boys love a good story, and they will love these stories well provided the life is not squeezed out of them by some dry-as-dust method of exegesis and some useless questioning as to who was David's great-grandfather and what was the geographic site of the Israelites' crossing.

But these hero stories must be modernized to be really effective. There must be a constant reminder that the God of David is the God of here and now, and that the mountain top prayer of Elijah, which never halted till its answer came in pelting, deluging rain,

was made to the same God who hears and answers importunate prayer in A. D. 1912.

The average working boy gave up his prayers long ago. He learned to pray as most children do in Sunday-school or at a mother's knee. But when he attained the dignity of twelve years or thereabouts he flung prayer to the winds, putting it away with other childish things.

The working boy comes back to his praying naturally and readily if it is put before him in the right way in his boys' club, and if he realizes that dozens of other boys are coming back in the same hearty, spontaneous fashion. He needs to be taught how to pray. And if he is reminded that prayer has a material side to it, and that a prayer for basket-ball skill is as reasonable in its way as was Elijah's prayer for rain, and that a prayer for a job is no more irreverent than the prophet's prayer for a dead lad's restoration to life, he will have a sudden awakening.

#### THE PRAYERS OF A BOY

Prayer will assume a new meaning and a fresh value. And if a general prayer in the simplest of phrases be composed for all the boys of all the club, many of them will learn it with eagerness and recite it a good deal



oftener than they will care to have you know. It will roll from their tongue as glibly as the club yell. And it will be just as expressive of one kind of loyalty as the yell is of another.

There will be some voluntary praying, too, in your own club meetings if you encourage this. But you must go gingerly about such encouragement.

There is danger in this public utterance of prayer, a danger which many a promoter of young people's meetings has discovered to his sorrow. But there is less danger among these unbooked working boys than among the highly educated high school boys, those who knowing a little bit fondly imagine they know it all.

A working boy who prays in the language of the street and the shop, the gymnasium and the game room is likely to pray genuinely and fervently. His prayer will be necessarily brief, and the briefer perhaps the more genuine and the more real. Half a minute is quite long enough for him to exhaust his eloquence. If he prays much longer there is a danger that he is making things up and trying to say what he doesn't mean.

A thirty second prayer is likely to have a

good deal of meaningfulness about it. And if a dozen boys follow each other's prayers in quick succession, none exceeding the thirty second limit, and if all then wind up in the Lord's prayer or the common prayer of the club there may be a real spirituality of utterance which some far more decorous prayer-meetings utterly lack.

It is not wise in a club of this sort to urge an early Sunday-school attendance on those who are Sunday-school-less. This may develop gradually. Too much eagerness on the part of the club promoters is likely to spell failure. On the other hand these Sunday meetings of club boys are likely to grow without much effort.

#### WHAT BOYS LIKE

Boys like to go where other boys are, and boys do not shrink from going on a Sunday morning or a Sunday evening to the rooms where they played basket-ball on a Saturday night. They are to meet the comrades of the game there, to engage in boyish badinage and the interchange of club gossip, and there to sing together hymns of boyhood, to read together a chapter from the best book in the world which till now has seemed to them an impossible and an outlandish book, to listen

to a straight talk on swearing or lying or stealing or on some phase of the manliness of Christ.

And they like it all the better if one of their own number who swore prodigiously yesterday and may be nabbed for coal train hopping the day after to-morrow is the accredited leader, who gives out the hymns, who stumbles over the Bible reading, and who may even be the maker of a crude but honest prayer.

These methods have been tried and they have not been found wanting. It is not theory that is being urged, but a very practical practice.

The method of training the high school boy in the way of a pure and undefiled religion is different from the way we should train the factory boy, just as one star differs from another in glory. The method of the high school type has been well developed through the Y. M. C. A. Here is the new and practical and undeveloped way of dealing with the corner boy, who has in him the making of a magnificent manhood, but who often develops into a visionless, effortless, dull and insipid worldling simply because no one in his boyhood set out to make him otherwise.

## X

### A WORK THAT LASTS

**T**HE proof of the pudding is in its digestibility. A pudding that won't work well in practical action is a failure, no matter how much sugar and spice and everything nice you may have put into it. The worth of a work is shown by its durability.

If it wears, well and good. And if the boy whom you have been trying to put in the right road "stays put," you have proven your problem and the answer is correct.

There is a good deal of temporariness about some modern methods. We comfort ourselves that this is juvenile nature and that a boy must outgrow certain tastes and fancies and occupations much as he outgrows his trousers and his shoes.

A boy may be an enthusiastic Christian Endeavourer through a busy winter. He vanishes in the summer and at the fall re-opening fails to "come round." The same holds good of various other organizations. He fails to "come round" partly because his gang doesn't come. But it is partly because

he has wearied of old methods and outgrown them just as he has outgrown shoes and trousers.

We learn to accept these changes as a matter of course. We do not concern ourselves much about them. A man who drilled many scores of boys in a Boys' Brigade years ago told me that the average duration of each Brigader was a year. He remarked this with the utmost complacence. It seemed to me like a confession of pitiful weakness both as to man and to method.

If the Boys' Brigade can hold its boys no longer than a year—a condition which experience tends to disprove—there's a lack somewhere. In doing work for boys there should be something incessant and continuous; a change of method when that is needed; a more or less shifting procession of boys; and yet a persistent hold of the boy by some means or other; not a process of frequent dismissal and graduation, which leaves the boy untended and unhelped at his most critical time.

#### THE MOST CRITICAL TIME

What is the most critical time? one may ask. At fourteen I would say; also at fifteen and at sixteen. Moreover at seventeen and

at eighteen. Then again it is nineteen and twenty. And if, having tended and shielded the boy till he is twenty-one, you congratulate yourself that all is well and that the boy should now be free to walk alone, I would suggest that again twenty-one and the year beyond are the most critical time, and that the boy must not be forsaken and abandoned even then.

There must be differences in methods surely for the fourteen-year-old lad and the twenty-year-old young man. But the need in each case is profound and real. And no matter how carefully nurtured has been the boy of fourteen, he will bear watching and guiding when he is half again as old.

Such rafts of boys used to flock to the famous Fall River Club that when a boy reached the mature age of fourteen he had to be turned out to make room for littler lads coming after him. This seemed necessary, but it also seemed cruel. So cruel that Mr. Borden, the boys' club builder, contributed another \$150,000 for the erection of a separate club that should take care of the boys from fourteen up.

Here was generosity equalled by wisdom. It is an odd and a slipshod habit we have of turning our boys into the cold world and

imagining that, because we have been heating them long and ardently before a glowing fire, they will never shiver again. And then perhaps if they fall frozen by the way-side we express the utmost astonishment and wonder why.

An important phase of a boys' club is its permanence. A Boys' Brigade may last for a year or two. Then the boy tires of military drill. A debating club may have its charms for a while. But one won't go debating forever. Most boys' organizations fostered by churches die young. It is a curious fact that there is a cumulative effect about gymnastics, and that such a game as basket-ball grows with the years. It is not unusual to find a boy getting the basket-ball fever at twelve and still suffering from it in virulent form at twenty-two. He has been playing industriously through ten long years, more skillfully and enthusiastically as time has run on, several nights a week throughout the season perhaps, and with no access of weariness.

This holds good in lesser degree of other forms of a club's activity. It must be understood that this club must have many forms of energy. It must be versatile and protean. It must have diversity and variety. But

with a gymnasium as its base and athletic teams of various sorts as its output there will be about it a stability and a solidarity which no other form of organization can attain. Brigades may rise and fall. Scouts may come and go. Glee clubs and secret orders and cobbling classes will have their brief day and be forgotten.

But a club organized along these lines will be a crescent force. It will attract many members and will drop many by the wayside. But it will hold for four or six or ten years some of the boys it corralled from corner and from shanty and from freight train and from back alley in the impressible years of their very early teens.

### **HOW TO REACH MEN**

How to reach the men is the great problem of to-day. The answer seems easy. It is by reaching the boys. Nearly everybody sees the wisdom of this. Many of them proceed to apply the wisdom in strangely unwise fashion.

Their methods have little of practicalness and still less of permanence. Before they get a real grip on the boys, the boys have wriggled off and escaped, years before they have attained their young manhood.



Unless the pudding is digestible and unless the plan is durable it does not count for much. The boy who is lured to Sunday-school for a box of Christmas candy and who is missing the middle of January and thereafter seems scarcely worth the going for. If the Christmas-candied boy is found in Sunday-school the middle of August, with Christmas treats and Easter eggs and the Sunday-school picnic far in the dim past and nothing of any consequence looming above the future horizon, that speaks well not merely for his own stability but for the wisdom of the school that caught and held him.

The best road to a boy's heart is through his stomach, ran the old-fashioned epigram. There is little truth in it in modern days. A boy may be captured by means of the stomach route, true enough, and he may be held for a total of ten minutes. He will be affectionate and pliable as long as the ice-cream lasts and the cake holds out. But he will not carry with him forever after a tender gratitude for the genial ice-cream dispenser and the amiable cake baker. He will smack his lips and clear out and forget all. For while the sweets have gone to his stomach, their shafts have not gotten anywhere near his heart.

**THE HEART OF A BOY**

The boy's heart must be reached by more up-to-date methods. Give him a place to play and the means of playing. Give him some well-ordered discipline in regard to his play. Give him rules and regulations which he will delight to abide by. Give him many companions—a great, noisy bunch of them—of like mind to play with. Cultivate in him and them an esprit de corps, a solidarity, a gang spirit, directing this gently into right channels and leading it diplomatically in reasonable directions. And that boy's heart, which some careless people half believed had no existence whatever, will begin to unbare itself most surprisingly. It has been touched and smitten.

He never parades it. He does not unveil it and carry it on his sleeve. He is a bit ashamed if he realizes that somebody has gotten a fugitive glimpse of it. He makes haste thereupon to bury it down deep and to assume a careless air and emit a rough phrase or two to indicate that there never, never was a heart, and that he would not own one for a million pounds.

But there's a genuineness and a sincerity there for all that, and you have gotten a good deal closer to it than if you had plied him

with ice-cream to the bursting point and fed him with cake till doomsday.

Not that ice-cream and cake and kindred edibles are to be despised. They will form an important ingredient of a profitable boys' club. But they had best be paid for by the boys themselves. Poor boys they may be, but poor boys, too, who like to pay their own way, and to whom the idea of a vast and splendid "banquet"—at fifteen cents per head ; beans and sandwiches and peanuts and such—appeals with far greater force than if they were to be regaled with turkey and oranges and gewgaws and truck at the expense of a beneficent church full of pious and bountiful women, obsessed with the idea that these boys never had a good time in all their lone lives, and that the only way to give them such was by emptying a horn of plenty upon them and into them. And that, as a result, they ought to be first-class saints forever after.

The Y. M. C. A. of to-day has shown a wide world how to get hold of boys and men of varying types and instil into them a spirit of camaraderie and loyalty which makes for a genuine Christian manhood. Boys' clubs with large plants and honourable history have shown how to instil a like spirit of friendli-

ness and faithfulness among boys of a cruder, rougher type, and how to bind them to the club and hold them through many continuous years. But the method of these clubs is and must be, whether the superintendents like it or no, strictly secular. And the reach of the Y. M. C. A., whether its leaders like to admit it or not, is for the boy higher up; the boy of the collar and the necktie and a smattering of erudition and of manners. A boys' club, athletic, social, educational, but essentially and outspokenly religious, combining the best factors of both these institutions, is a novelty.

It has rarely been tried. It has been singularly ignored. The time is here to put it to practical and effective test. If it is given this thorough test I believe the vital problem of "Men and Religion" will be far less perplexing a decade hence.

### **A RELIGIOUS WORK**

The "social centre" has suddenly arisen among us. The recreation of the boy and the girl has made a swift appeal to us. It had not till very lately occurred to the wide public that this recreation needed looking after. There has been a sudden awakening. Schoolhouses are ablaze these nights which had never known an evening light before.

The boys are being entertained. The girls are being instructed. The families are getting together and having a wonderfully good time of it.

Which is precisely what is needed, and to all which we would say, "The more the merrier." But the church cannot afford to let the school do it all. It cannot fold its hands and yield to purely secular agencies this filling of the youngster's leisure and this provision of wholesome fun and frolic. The social centre is sure to do an increasingly good work in the coming years in giving to the young people's social life a new trend, and with its gymnastics and its dances providing a new outlet for their physical energy. But meanwhile the living church cannot be negligent or indifferent. The social centre's work is absolutely—as it aims to be—secular. The church is privileged to do a like work which shall be essentially and primarily religious. In no way can it better approach that work than by this simple route of the practical and popular boys' club. And through no form of effort, I believe, can substantial, tangible and lasting results be better attained than by using these methods of reaching and holding boys for the greater glory of God.

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